



**BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

OF THE

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH**

FOR THE

**YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1950**



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### **PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF**

*Medical Officer of Health:*

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., D.P.H.

*Borough Engineer and Sanitary Inspector:*

R. A. BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

*Assistant to Sanitary Inspector:*

E. FURSE.

*Hon. Meteorologist:*

ALDERMAN HARRY.



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MR. MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND COUNCILLORS,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year ended 31st December, 1950.

The general health of the Borough remained good throughout the year. There was an almost complete absence of infectious conditions.

It will be seen from the accompanying table that the births exceeded the deaths and the corresponding rates compare very favourably indeed with those for England and Wales.

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SECTION A

General Statistics

Area (statute acres)	...	...	...	...	806
Population—1931 Census	...	...	...	...	3,307
Estimated Home Population—Mid 1950	...	...	...	...	4,040
Number of Inhabited Houses	...	...	...	...	1,107
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£24,647
Product of Penny Rate	...	...	...	...	£99
Loan Debt	...	...	...	...	£52,806

Vital Statistics

			Male.	Female.	Total.	
Live Births	...	...	36	30	66	
Legitimate	...	...	32	30		
Illegitimate	...	...	4	—		
						<i>England and Wales.</i>
Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population				16.3		15.8
Corrected Birth Rate	...	...	...	16.1		
Still Births	...	...	...	1		
Still Birth Rate per 1,000 live and still births	...	...	...	15.0		0.37
			Male.	Female.	Total.	
Deaths	...	...	30	27	57	
Crude Death Rate per 1,000 population				14.1		11.6
Corrected Death Rate	...	...	...	11.4		
Deaths from Maternal Causes				Nil		
Maternal Mortality	...	...	...	—		0.86
Deaths of Infants under 1 year				1		
Infant Mortality	...	...	...	15.2		29.8

The 57 deaths of the townsfolk were made up as follows :—

INFECTIOUS CAUSES :

Encephalitis	...	...	...	...	...	1
Herpes Zoster	...	...	...	...	...	1
Influenza	...	...	...	...	...	1
Pneumococcal septicaemia	...	...	...	...	...	1

GENERAL CAUSES :

Cerebral Vascular Disease	...	...	...	...	...	15
Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	8
Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	...	8
Senility	...	...	...	...	...	3
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	2
Gastric Ulcer	...	...	...	...	...	2
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	2

Disease of the Prostate	...	...	...	...	2
Arteriosclerosis	...	...	...	...	1
Asthma	...	...	...	...	1
Nephritis	...	...	...	...	1
Accidental	...	...	...	...	2
Other Causes	...	...	...	...	5

INFANTS UNDER 1 YEAR :

Haemorrhagic Disease of the new-born	...	...	1
TOTAL	...	...	57

Age of Death Table

Age at Death.					Males.	Females.
Infants under 1 year	...	...	...	...	—	1
1-5 years	...	...	...	...	2	—
5-15	...	...	...	...	1	1
15-25	...	...	...	...	1	—
25-35	...	...	...	...	1	—
35-45	...	...	...	...	—	—
45-55	...	...	...	...	—	—
55-65	...	...	...	...	4	2
65-75	...	...	...	...	13	9
75 and over	...	...	...	...	8	14
TOTALS					30	27

SECTION B

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES

The general provisions of the health services remain as in previous years and appear to be generally adequate for our needs, with the exception of suitable accommodation for old people.

The ambulance continues to be administered by the St. John Ambulance Association on behalf of the Devon County Council. A new 28 h.p. Austin Ambulance was acquired for the Association at a cost of some £1,800 by local voluntary effort. This, in my opinion, is a very commendable achievement.

The vicissitudes of the National Health Service appear to be settling and the chief trouble for the future appears to be one of economics. However, it is becoming apparent that having the medical services divided into three watertight compartments is not likely to give the best results, and a feeling is becoming general that some integrating machinery is needed.



## SECTION C

### SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

Mr. Brunskill has submitted the following report on the Sanitary Circumstances of the Borough for the year :—

#### Water Supply.

*Sources:* The whole sources of supply are from watersheds in the interland of Dartmoor feeding two intakes, one at Newbridge on the Black-a-ven stream, and the older and smaller at Yes Tor on the Red-a-ven stream. Both are within the area of the Dartmoor National Park and within the military training and artillery ranges. These latter largely preclude both the access of the public and minimise stock grazing on the watersheds, and therefore potential pollution. Supplies at the intakes have been quite adequate throughout the year.

*Rainfall:* Rainfall records are taken at two points on the watershed and at the Filter Station. Returns are sent monthly to the Air Ministry Meteorological Office. The extraordinarily high figures of 1946 have not been surpassed, as will be seen from the following comparative figures for the past five years, but 1950 figures were the second overall highest for the past eleven years and 40% higher than in 1949. Readings are taken monthly at Cranmere and Newbridge and daily at the Filter Station.

		1950	1949	1948	1947	1946
Cranmere	...	91.00	66.50	92.80	78.05	109.40
Newbridge	...	79.10	61.95	76.66	59.95	86.15
Filter Station	...	62.13	44.40	56.55	49.20	67.99
Dry Days						
(no rain)	...	144	176	158	188	105

The driest months were January, October, March and May, and the wettest November, February, August and September, in those orders. There were long dry spells of ten days average in March, May and June only. From June 12th onwards there were only 61 rainless days. Strangely on only four days, February 2nd, June 13th, August 20th and November 20th, did more than 1" fall. After June 12th the longest dry spell was for five days only from November 3rd to 7th.

*Intake Mains:* Though within the artillery danger zones, intake mains have again escaped serious damage and have functioned properly throughout the year, despite frequent artillery fire. Very little clearing of old supply pipes and land draining has been carried out on the abandoned works on the Okehampton Park Estate. This work is carried out periodically and is of no productive value at all to the undertaking.

*Filtration and Treatment:* The plant has been in continuous operation throughout the year. Minor intermittent faults were remedied by the attendant in daily attendance. The new coloured

pipe system has been found most satisfactory. The Autominor meter and Relay valve were replaced. The Reservoir 6" Venturi Meter completely overhauled by the makers for the first time in fifteen years. The filters overhauled in 1948 are in generally good condition. Filters are generally washed daily by high pressure air scour and kept up to a high operational standard which is essential owing to the intake of peaty solids. The treated water is clear, soft, colourless and of excellent taste. It is particularly pleasant for both personal use and domestic washing. Analyses indicate it to be of a satisfactory standard of purity both bacteriologically and chemically. Three additional men are trained and available for filter operation.

*Distribution:* The Zonal distribution system giving a standardised pressure in the central low-level area and maintaining pressure in the outer high-level zones continues to operate with the minimum of trouble. It is interesting to note that the supply has now been in continuous day and night operation for 14 years without interruption, except for repairs.

Extensions carried out include new mains in Mill Road connecting Station Road direct to Kempley Road, Park Row, and Upper Mill Road, for which 100 yards of standard 3" C. Asbestos water main pipes have been used. At Domehayes a long outstanding defective supply was remedied by the owners laying new service pipe at the rear of the houses. A long new service pipe was also laid by the owner from Old Vicarage to Old Vicarage Farm in Broadmoor Lane.

During the late summer extensive scraping of the older distribution mains was carried out as follows :—

*Castle Road*—whole length from Station Road to Castle Hospital—3" main.

*Castle Cottages Road*—Whole length from Castleford to end of cottages—3" main.

*North Street*—Whole length from Fore Street to Macey's Terrace—3" main.

*Northfield Road*—Whole length from North Street to Crediton Road—3" main.

*Crediton Road*—Northfield Road to Victoria Street—3" main.

After these works some discoloration persisted for a considerable period, but it has gradually become less and less noticeable. As a result of the work the supply and flow in the areas covered has substantially improved, especially to the Castle Hospital. This is not surprising as over a ton of incrustated deposit was removed from the total length of 1,932 yards of water mains cleared. While the work was in progress new standard D.C.F.S. fire hydrants were installed to replace obsolete types where possible.



Mains were regularly flushed and leak inspections continuously carried out. Leaks were found and repaired on 22 corporation service pipes, 4 corporation mains of which 3 were completely fractured, and 52 consumer services. Considerable maintenance work in clearing service pipes, mainly by force pump, was again carried out, no fewer than 46 services being treated in this way. The appointment of a plumber as filter attendant for the past nine years continues a most satisfactory arrangement for maintaining and servicing the undertaking. When main supplies are cut off for long periods for repairs, warnings are given by loud-speaker van or house-to-house calls. This is often more costly than the repair works themselves. It should be noted that though the area of supply and number of services progressively increase each year, the total repairs and consequent cost progressively decreases. This is due to the standardised water pressure maintaining reduced wear and tear on service pipes. Operation was simplified towards the end of the year by the elimination of the nightly valve control duty at the Station Road Pressure Reducing Valve. New services and supply pipes are now largely being laid in copper tube in place of lead, and wherever possible stopcocks are fixed direct on the mains to obviate cutting off main supplies for repairs. New services have been provided for six existing properties, two new private houses, one new school extension, and six new houses at Savile Mead.

### **Drainage and Sewerage.**

Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued to operate satisfactorily with no serious defects. Trade effluent from the Gas Works has continued with little nuisance. Very minor repairs were carried out on the East and West river sewers.

The enlarged sludge beds have been in operation throughout the year and have been most satisfactory. The heavy floods on August 20th caused no damage to sewers or drains. Additional labour was provided for the farmer for clearing and spreading sludge. The irrigation channels were partially cleared. Effluent standards have been well maintained and no complaints as to river pollution have been received.

Additional improvements at the sewage disposal works have included the construction of a new concrete overflow sludge pit and concrete sludge drying bed by the Council's own staff. The motor scythe has been used for clearing weeds and docks. Two tons of stones were cleared from the West River and Market Street sewers.

### **Rivers and Streams.**

The East and West Ockment rivers have generally remained self-cleansing and very clean. Solid rubbish is periodically removed. Minor intermittent pollutions from the Gas Works and Laundries, and one from an hotel sink waste have been remedied at short notice.

## Swimming Pools.

The swimming pool and paddling pool, both of which are supplied by continuous running water, have been well maintained and conducted during the year. In addition the pools are cleaned periodically during the season and periodically lightly chlorinated.

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## Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The following visits were carried out by your Inspector during the year :—

Houses	...	...	...	...	87
Houses <i>re</i> Housing	...	...	...	...	42
Drainage	...	...	...	...	38
Water Closets	...	...	...	...	19
Sewerage	...	...	...	...	17
Water Supply	...	...	...	...	67
Rivers	...	...	...	...	12
Refuse Disposal	...	...	...	...	25
Bakehouses	...	...	...	...	14
Refuse Disposal Tip		...	...	...	16
Tents and Vans	...	...	...	...	2
Schools	...	...	...	...	19
Infestation	...	...	...	...	2
Rodents	...	...	...	...	24
Animals	...	...	...	...	8
Food Shops	...	...	...	...	43
Offensive Trades	...	...	...	...	8
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	18
Informal Notices	...	...	...	...	33
Remedied	...	...	...	...	26

## Public Cleansing.

Refuse collection and disposal have been carried out directly by the Corporation, and weekly collections have again been maintained without interruption throughout the year. In addition, monthly collections are made in the Brightley area for the Okehampton Rural District Council. With the suspension of waste paper salvage collection there was the inevitable increase in bin refuse, and collection time had to be increased.

The Corporation use a 2-3 ton Commer Tipping motor wagon. This is provided with a quick change dual purpose body cover which I designed for both sanitary refuse collection and general transport work. A crew of a driver and two men collect the refuse satisfactorily on Thursdays and Fridays each week with an additional trade collection on Mondays. Street cleansing is also carried



out over some areas at the same time as refuse collection. The collection and disposal of refuse in this manner is proving considerably more satisfactory than the former arrangements, during the nearly five years it has been in operation up to the end of 1950. With the improvement of available supplies further steps to replace defective bins have been taken.

Normal street cleansing is by orderly truck, and streets are also cleansed on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

Refuse disposal is by regulated tipping on the Council's refuse tip, where rodent control is carried out by the Council's own operator. In addition, the tip is regularly treated and sprayed with tip dressing for the control of flies. This is done daily or two or three times a week as necessary and has been found most effective, so much so that even in dry hot weather the tip is kept completely free of flies. Considerable quantities of trade refuse are also dumped on the tip. Levelling of the tip to improve its shape is continually carried out, and gradually accumulated scrap metal is being buried in. A bulldozer was used one day levelling off. Meat and fish traders were circularized as to the need to keep offensive matter off the tip, with effective results.

### **Rodent Control**

In accordance with Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries requirements, rodent control has been in operation throughout the year with the part-time operator. The operator was changed at the end of the year. Block control has been carried out where necessary throughout the area, and at the refuse tip and sewage disposal works. In addition, the whole of the sewers were tested in March and September, and the minimum of infestation was discovered. The incidence of infestation in the area continues to decline and control is effectively keeping it down to these desirable limits.

### **Infectious Diseases and Disinfestation**

No premises whatever needed to be disinfected or fumigated during the year. No cases of infectious disease had to be dealt with for the third year in succession. Disinfestation treatment has been necessary in one case for flies.

### **Smoke Abatement**

Three minor cases of smoke emission were dealt with by informal notice.

### **Fish Frying**

There are two small fish frying shops, and one larger fish-frying shop and café, which have been well conducted. No formal action was necessary.

### **Offensive Trades.**

At the two establishments eight inspections were made.



**Factories Acts, 1937 and 1948.**

The following tables set out in detail inspections during the year and cases in which defects were found :—

**1. INSPECTIONS.**

<i>Premises</i>  (1)	<i>Number on Register</i>  (2)	<i>Number of</i>		
		<i>Inspections</i>  (3)	<i>Written Notices</i>  (4)	<i>Occupiers Prosecuted</i>  (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ... ..	28	40	1	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ... ..	10	22	—	—
(iii) Other premises ... ..	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ... ..	38	62	1	Nil.

**2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND.**

<i>Particulars</i>  (1)	<i>Number of cases in which defects were found</i>				<i>Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted</i>  (6)
	<i>Found</i>  (2)	<i>Remedied</i>  (3)	<i>Referred</i> <i>To H.M. Inspector</i> (4) <i>By H.M. Inspector</i> (5)		
Want of cleanliness .....	3	3	—	—	—
Overcrowding ...	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable temperature	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate ventilation ...	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors ...	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences :					
(a) Insufficient	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective	1	1	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for sexes	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ...	4	4	Nil.	Nil.	Nil.

## SECTION D

### HOUSING

During the year further nominal maintenance repairs and painting works have been carried out on the pre-war houses in Macey's Terrace and Brayham's Terrace Estates. Houses are completely overhauled, redecorated and cleansed on each change of tenancy. At the end of the year overhaul and repainting of exterior at Macey's Terrace was put in hand.

Minor works were carried out in the fourteen additional family units provided by the requisitioning and conversion of properties.

On the Lower Brayhams and Brickfield Temporary Housing Estates, the twenty-five houses had minor maintenance repair works.

On the Far View Permanent Housing Estate, site works, including the building up of boundary hedges and dry walling, were continued as materials and labour became available.

On the Savile Mead Estate six U-Type traditional brick houses were commenced in August, 1948. At the end of 1949 four were completed, and the remaining two were finished and occupied in January and February, 1950.

In addition, tenders were obtained for an additional 8 Type C1 and C2 and 2 Type U permanent brick houses, and prices for these were found to be too high for acceptance. Negotiations with a view to their reduction were in progress at the beginning of the year. Approval for these houses was received and work on eight of these was commenced in August and was in progress at the end of the year.

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## SECTION E

### INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

#### **Milk.**

Twelve inspections of cowsheds, dairies and milk-shops were made during the year and informal notices were given. Generally the standard of cleanliness continued good and in some cases very good.

Ten samples of milk were taken during the year from ungraded supplies and all were found to be satisfactory.

#### **Food Premises.**

In connection with the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, Section 13, special attention has been given to food premises. The standard of cleanliness has been well maintained. In some cases particular

pride appears to be taken in maintaining a high standard of hygiene. The policy of lighter and brighter colours such as cream and white in the decoration of shops and premises where food is handled has been encouraged. Dirt cannot go undetected for long against these lighter backgrounds.

*Bakehouses and Meat Shops:* These premises have been well maintained, and most tradesmen take a pride in the cleanliness of their premises. Inspections were made and notice to provide improved lavatory accommodation in one instance was sent.

### Food Poisoning.

No case of food poisoning was notified by medical practitioners during the year.

### Meat.

The Tavistock Urban District Council have authorised the inclusion of the subjoined table of meat inspection at their Abattoir from whence you derive your meat :—

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED

	<i>Cattle excluding Cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep and Lambs</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
Number killed ... ..	1717	1102	2370	7598	516
Number inspected ... ..	1717	1102	2370	7598	516
<i>All diseases except Tuberculosis:</i>					
Whole carcasses condemned	15	73	88	118	7
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ... ..	867	664	22	1813	51
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis ... ..	51.36%	66.88%	4.64%	25.41%	11.22%
<i>Tuberculosis only:</i>					
Whole carcasses condemned	11	46	8	—	5
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ... ..	67	199	—	—	27
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis ... ..	4.54%	22.23%	.34%	—	6.2%



Other Foodstuffs.

Foods have been examined and twelve condemnation certificates have been issued covering in nearly all cases foods which had deteriorated owing to defective containers. This is a further substantial reduction on 1947-49.

In addition, 159 lbs. of meat and 14 lbs. of fish were condemned.

SECTION F

PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASE

The following cases of infectious disease were notified during the year by medical practitioners :—

Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	3
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	1
Meningococcal Infection			...	...	1

The following cases of infectious disease were notified from the schools in the Borough during the year :—

Chicken Pox	...	...	...	...	2
-------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	---

The Borough could scarcely be freer than it was during the year from disease of an infectious nature.

*Diphtheria:* No case of diphtheria was notified during the year. I am still of opinion that immunisation would be more efficiently organised on a local basis, particularly as there is evidence of a falling off in the number of children being treated.

*Tuberculosis:* 3 new cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year. No deaths were recorded from this cause.

At the end of the year 22 cases of tuberculosis remained on the register as follows :—

<i>Pulmonary</i>				<i>Non-Pulmonary</i>			
Males	...	...	10	Males	...	...	2
Females	...	...	8	Females	...	...	2

In conclusion I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

*Medical Officer of Health.*





